

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FRB-03 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1674

INFO USDEL MTN GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 0828

DEPT PLEASE REPEAT TO ALL ARA DIPLOMATIC POSTS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, VE, EALR

SUBJECT: BEHIND THE SCENES OF SELA MINISTERIAL MEETING

REF: CARACAS 551; CARACAS 606

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES, THE DECISION BY THE RECENT
SEAL MINISTERIAL MEETING TO CRITICIZE US TRADE ACT IN FINAL COMMUNIQUE

WAS NON-CONTROVERSIAL--ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SOME DEBATE OVER PRECISE
WORDING--AND THE US SHOULD EXPECT THIS CRITICISM TO BE A HARDY
PERENNIAL IN SELA PRONOUNCEMENTS AS LONG AS VENEZUELA AND
ECUADOR ARE EXCLUDED FROM GSP. MOST INTERESTING MEMBER-COUNTRY
ATTITUDES TOWARDS SELA EVIDENT IN CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSIONS WERE
CUBA'S LOW PROFILE, MEXICO'S ENTHUSIASM, ARGENTINA'S GROWING
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ACTIVISM, BRAZIL'S CONTINUING RESERVE AND DESIRE OF SOME CARIBBEAN

COUNTRIES TO ENSURE THAT SELA DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL BE FROM ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATION. END SUMMARY.

1. INDIVIDUALS WHO ATTENDED JANUARY 12-15 SELA MINISTERIAL MEETING HAVE PROVIDED THE EMBASSY WITH INFORMATION ON SOME BEHIND-THE-SCENES DEVELOPMENTS. REPORTEDLY, THERE WAS A GENERAL FEELING AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS THAT THE MEETING WENT SMOOTHLY AND ACCOMPLISHED ITS ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVES: APPROVING A LATIN AMERICAN POSITION FOR GROUP OF 77 MEETING IN MANILA AND REVIEWING THE OUTLINES OF A PROSPECTIVE SELA WORK PROGRAM. DISCUSSIONS APPARENTLY PROCEEDED PRAGMATICALLY AND WITHOUT RANCOR DESPITE THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE TWENTY-FIVE PARTICIPANTS. REPORTED ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTS ARE COVERED BELOW.

2. U.S. TRADE ACT. THERE WAS LITTLE DISCUSSION OF THE COMMUNIQUE PARAGRAPH CRITICIZING THE U.S. TRADE ACT (CARACAS 606). ALL DELEGATIONS ACCEPTED THE WISH OF VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR TO HAVE SUCH A PARAGRAPH, BUT SOME (APPARENTLY INCLUDING COLOMBIA--BOGOTA 662) WORKED TO ENSURE THAT THE PARAGRAPH DID NOT FIGURE TOO PROMINENTLY IN THE COMMUNIQUE AND THAT ITS WORDING WAS MODERATE. ONE RELIABLE SOURCE EXPECTED THAT SUCH A PARAGRAPH WOULD BE A HARDY PERENNIAL OF SELA PRONOUNCEMENTS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS VENEZUELA AND ECUADRO ARE REMOVED FROM GSP EXCLUSION.

3. COUNTRY ATTITUDES. MEXICO HAD THE MOST ACTIVE DELEGATION AT THE SELA MEETING. VENEZUELA WAS ALSO ACTIVE, BUT NOT WITH THE SAME INTENSITY OR FREQUENCY AS MEXICO. MOST STRIKING WAS THE MARKEDLY INCREASED INTEREST WHICH THE ARGENTINIAN DELEGATION SHOWED IN THE PROCEEDINGS. BRAZIL, WHICH WAS REPRESENTED BY ITS AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, MAINTAINED ITS RESERVED POSTURE. CUBA KEPT A LOW PROFILE AND SAID LITTLE DURING THE MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS. THE MOST ACTIVE DEBATE OCCURRED OVER THE ISSUE OF THE NATIONALITY OF THE SELA DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, WHOSE NOMINATION HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY BARBADOS, ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THIS NUMBER-TWO POST SHOULD GO TO SOMEONE FROM AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING MEMBER STATE. REPORTEDLY, SOME OF THESE DELEGATIONS SAID THAT WHILE THEY WISHED TO BE "LATIN," THEY WANTED TO MAINTAIN ENGLISH AS A CO-EQUAL LANGUAGE WITH SPANISH IN SELA.

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5. ANOTHER REASONS FOR THE APRIL MINISTERIAL MEETING WILL BE TO REVIEW THE RESULTS OF THE GROUP OF 77 MEETING AND PREPARE A COMMON POSITION FOR UNCTAD IV IN MAY. THERE MAY NOT BE ANOTHER MINISTERIAL MEETING UNTIL 1977, SINCE ARTICLE 11 OF THE SELA CHARTER SPECIFIES THAT THE LATIN MAERICAN COUNCIL WILL MEET AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL ONCE A YEAR. THE RECENT SESSION WAS BILLED AS AN "EXTRAORDINARY MEETING."

6. SECRETARIAL ORGANIZATION AND BUDGET. THE SELA SECRETARIAT WAS

HARD PRESSED TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF A FULL-FLEDGED MINISTERIAL MEETING. ALTHOUGH HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING, ONE SENIOR SECRETARIAT OFFICIAL COMPLAINED THAT HE WAS SERIOUSLY SHORT OF STAFF AND OBSERVED THAT BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION WAS A "TRULY MONUMENTAL" TASK. ASKED IF HE EXPECTED AN ECONOMICS EXPERT FROM EVERY SELA COUNTRY TO BE ON THE STAFF, HE SAID THAT THERE WOULD BE AN EXPERT FROM EACH AREA, NOT EACH COUNTRY. HE WAS CONCERNED OVER THE DIFFICULTIES BOTH IN LOCATING ABLE PEOPLE AND IN SATISFYING STRONG PRESSURES FROM INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES FOR STAFF POSITIONS. THE MINISTERS APPROVED AN ANNUAL SELA BUDGET OF ABOUT \$2 MILLION, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS DIVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

- A. ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, AND MEXICO: 12.5 PERCENT
 - B. CHILE, COLOMBIA, CUBA, PERU, AND VENEZUELA: 7 PERCENT
 - C. BOLIVIA, COSTA RICA, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, JAMAICA, NICARAGUA, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, AND URUGUAY: 1.2 PERCENT; AND
 - D. BARBADOS, GRENADA, GUYANA, AND HAITI: 4 PERCENT.
- SOME SELA OFFICIALS CONSIDER THIS BUDGET VERY LIMITED, BUT EXPECT IT TO EXPAND AS WORK PROGRAM GETS UNDERSAY.
- SHLAUDEMAM

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